Melissa Wargo

From: Carol Burton
Sent: Wednesday, June 3, 2026 9:51 AM
To: Joy Mischley; Melissa Wargo; Kelly Tornow; Christy Agner
Cc: Jenna Kubiak
Subject: Re: FYI

Thanks, Joy. I guess we will see what happens after the proposal goes to the State Board for action. Jenna, thank you for your notes, as well.

carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 3, 2026 8:54 AM
To: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jenna Kubiak <jkubiak@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: FYI

Please see enclosed.

My best,
Joy

Western Carolina University

Joy Mischley, MSW, LCSW
Director
Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
Western Carolina University | 273 Belk
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2643 | jmischley@wcu.edu
Pronouns: she/her/hers

From: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 3, 2026 8:50 AM
To: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: FYI

https://www.newsfromthestates.com/article/gop-county-elections-board-member-said-he-was-warned-against-voting-campus-polling-site

Western Carolina University

Julia Hartbarger Duvall '15

Assistant Director of Communications

University Communications and Marketing
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson Building
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2197 | c: (828) 226.0067
jduvall@wcu.edu

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Wednesday, June 3, 2026 9:18 AM
To: Rich Price; Christy Agner
Subject: Re: FYI

Thanks!

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Rich Price <rprice@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 3, 2026 9:04:47 AM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: FW: FYI

For awareness. Saw this pop up on social this morning.

Western Carolina University

Rich Price '88
Chief Marketing & Strategic Partnerships Officer
Chancellor's Division
Western Carolina University | 530 HFR
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2979 | c: (828) 736-1556 | rprice@wcu.edu

https://www.newsfromthestates.com/article/gop-county-elections-board-member-said-he-was-warned-against-voting-campus-polling-site

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Wednesday, June 3, 2026 9:16 AM
To: Joy Mischley; Carol Burton; Kelly Tornow; Christy Agner
Cc: Jenna Kubiak
Subject: Re: FYI

Thanks Joy

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 3, 2026 8:54:42 AM
To: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Jenna Kubiak <jkubiak@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: FYI

Please see enclosed.

My best,
Joy

Joy Mischley, MSW, LCSW
Director
Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
Western Carolina University | 273 Belk
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2643 | jmischley@wcu.edu
Pronouns: she/her/hers

From: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 3, 2026 8:50 AM
To: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: FYI

https://www.newsfromthestates.com/article/gop-county-elections-board-member-said-he-was-warned-against-voting-campus-polling-site

Julia Hartbarger Duvall '15

Assistant Director of Communications

University Communications and Marketing
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson Building

1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723

o: (828) 227.2197 | c: (828) 226.0067
jduvall@wcu.edu

Melissa Wargo

From: Carol Burton
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2026 3:06 PM
To: Richard Starnes; Melissa Wargo; Lori Anderson
Subject: MOU re: Voting at WCU
Attachments: Memorandum of Understanding - 2026.docx

All: just FYI and reaction, if any, to the MOU crafted by the Jackson County Board of Elections. Please see attached and below. The BoE will meet again next week on Tuesday and would like any feedback on this MOU by then. Once the MOU is confirmed, Kelly Tornow will finalize our Early/Polling site plan with them and we will empanel our voting site committee.

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2026 2:35 PM
To: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: MOU re: Voting at WCU

Please see the enclosed received from Amanda Allen/BOE this morning. Please let Kelly and me know of any input or needed next steps.

My best,
Joy

Western Carolina University

Joy Mischley, MSW, LCSW
Director
Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
Western Carolina University | 273 Belk
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2643 | jmischley@wcu.edu
Pronouns: she/her/hers

From: Amanda Allen <amandaallen@jacksonnc.org>
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2026 9:57 AM
To: Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>

Cc: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: MOU re: Voting at WCU

WARNING: This email originated from a non-WCU email account. Do not click links or open attachments unless you are confident the content is safe.

Good morning, Joy & Kelly. I hope y'all are well and recovering from the end of the semester excitement!

I believe Joy shared what was discussed at last week's Board meeting and I apologize for any confusion. The Board was looking to have something less formal as the initial step in this process; I had jumped ahead by looking at more comprehensive site agreements.

To that end, Board member Jay Pavey has written a Memorandum of Understanding about the intent and needs for this partnership. They would like to have this MOU signed to then move forward with the voting process; then we could follow up with a detailed agreement (I do hope to roll similar agreements out to all sites).

I have attached the MOU as it is written now. Could you please review and let me know your thoughts? We are scheduled to meet again on Tuesday, May 26 at 10 am to discuss the status of the MOU and the Early Voting plan.

Thank you for your partnership!

Best,

JACKSON COUNTY
Board of Elections

Amanda Pressley Allen
(she/her/hers)
Director of Elections
(p) 828.586.7531 (f) 828.586.1951

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Prepared by:
PAVEY LAW FIRM, P.A.
Attorney & Counselor at Law
33 Dillsboro Road
Sylva, North Carolina 28779

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

COUNTY OF JACKSON

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

THIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (the "Memorandum") made and entered into this the _____ day of May, 2026, by and between the **JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS**, 876 Skyland Drive #1, Sylva, North Carolina 28779 (the "Board") and **WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**, 1 W University Way, Cullowhee, North Carolina 28723 (the "University"); collectively, the "Parties."

WITNESSETH

WHEREAS, the Board has the responsibility of overseeing, monitoring, and regulating all state, county, and municipal elections in Jackson County, North Carolina; and,

WHEREAS, the Board is responsible for, and empowered to establish voting sites throughout Jackson County, North Carolina; and,

WHEREAS, the University desires to provide a voting site for the 2026 General Election, as well as for future elections.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board and University enter into this Memorandum with the intent to enter into a future contract with the following provisions:

1. Site: Multi-Purpose Room #204, within the Health and Human Sciences Building located at 4121 Little Savannah Drive, Cullowhee, North Carolina 28723 (the "Room"); and,

2. Period of Use: The Room shall be made available for the Early Voting Period as designated by the Board, as well as for the actual Day of Voting in 2026, as well as for all future Early Voting periods and Actual Day of Voting for the next 10 years; and,

3. Parking: The University shall provide 20 parking spaces in the upper parking lot closest to the building; these parking sites shall be designated specifically for voters and shall have a sign prominently displayed for each parking spot that states, "Reserved for Voting" and "15 Minute Time Period"; the University shall also provide adequate parking closest to the Health and Human Sciences Building (the "Building") for Curbside Voting; and,

4. Tent Area: The University shall provide adequate space within close proximity of the Building so that the various political parties may erect tents to display campaign materials and other various voter information; and,

5. Electronic Signage: The University shall display an electronic sign on Highway 107 directing traffic up Little Savannah Road that leads to the Building; additionally, the University shall display an electronic sign on Little Savannah Road directing traffic into the parking lot of the Building; and,

6. Parking Lot Signage: The University shall prominently display signs within the Building Parking Lot directing voters to the proper location; the University shall cover all, "Do Not Enter" signs in the upper parking lot of the Building; and,

7. Wi-Fi: The University shall provide adequate wireless connectivity throughout the periods of Early Voting and the Day of Voting to support the voting staff; and,

8. Equipment: The University shall provide an adequate number of rectangular tables to assist with voting, as well as adequate number of chairs; and,

9. Maintenance of Room: The Board shall ensure the Room is cleaned following each use and shall return the room to the same condition as practicable following its use; and,

10. Cost: The University shall allow the Board to use the Room for no cost;

11. Termination: Either Party can terminate any agreement entered into with a 90-day written notice; and,

12. Binding Agreement: This Memorandum confirms what the Parties agree to commit to in a future written Contract; should either of the Parties materially deviate from this Memorandum, then either Party can immediately terminate this Memorandum and neither Party shall be bound by the terms contained herein.

SIGNATURES ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties set their hand and seal the day and year first written above.

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

_____ (SEAL)
_____, _____

JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

_____ (SEAL)
William Thompson, Chairman

Melissa Wargo

From: Carol Burton
Sent: Wednesday, May 13, 2026 3:22 PM
To: Richard Starnes; Melissa Wargo; Lori Anderson
Subject: Fw: BOE mtg results 5/13/26

YI,

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, May 13, 2026 3:02:16 PM
To: Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>; Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>; Jenna Kubiak <jkubiak@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: BOE mtg results 5/13/26

Hi Kelly, Carol, Jenna and Christy,

I attended the Jackson County Board of Elections meeting this morning.

At the meeting, Amanda Allen (Director) shared that she had been in touch with WCU counsel/legal. Amanda communicated WCU's ongoing commitment to partner with the Board of Elections to facilitate a polling site at HHS and to meet its needs. Amanda also confirmed WCU's willingness to provide 20 parking spots on the upper lot at HHS, additional signage, and electronic signs. She also read a statement/information from Kelly Turnow, essentially confirming Western's support.

The Chairman of the Board expressed that he was not ready to vote and had ongoing concerns about parking, signage, and accessibility. The Board discussed wanting to have a Memorandum of Intent with WCU to document mutual agreement to their requests prior to voting. There was some discussion about this not being the entire Polling Place Site Agreement (which Amanda shared would be signed after a vote), but rather a letter that summarizes key points/requests from the BOE.

Board member Jay Pavey (a lawyer) volunteered to draft this memorandum by the end of the week.

My best,
Joy

Joy Mischley, MSW, LCSW

Director

Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning

Western Carolina University | 273 Belk

1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723

o: (828) 227.2643 | jmischley@wcu.edu

Pronouns: she/her/hers

Melissa Wargo

From: Carol Burton
Sent: Friday, May 8, 2026 4:42 PM
To: Chris Williams
Cc: Melissa Wargo; Brian Foster; Stephen Wilson
Subject: Re: Request for Membership on the Campus Voting Site Committee

Fantastic. Thank you all!

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Chris Williams <cjwilliams@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, May 8, 2026 4:38:23 PM
To: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Brian Foster <fosterb@email.wcu.edu>; Stephen Wilson <swilson@wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Request for Membership on the Campus Voting Site Committee

Hi Carol. I've copied Brian and I support his time on this very important initiative. He also noted that if he can't attend, he will send Stephen Wilson in his place.

Thanks,
Chris

Western Carolina University

Chris Williams, MBA
Chief Information Officer
Office of the CIO
Western Carolina University | 106B Cordelia Camp
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7282 | cio@wcu.edu

From: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, May 08, 2026 4:14 PM
To: Chris Williams <cjwilliams@email.wcu.edu>

Cc: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Request for Membership on the Campus Voting Site Committee

Hi Chris:

I know Melissa has raised the issue of an on-campus polling station at EC recently, and it appears we may host it at the Health and Human Sciences Building (room 204) on behalf of Jackson County Board of Elections. We are empaneling the committee to oversee it and would like to add a representative from IT to serve on that committee...Brian Foster was recommended. Do you support that and if so, would you please contact him and his supervisor to ascertain willingness and availability?

The committee will meet periodically, likely starting in late May or early June and then throughout the rest of the year until mid-November, incorporating the mid-term general election cycle (October 15- 31 and November 3). The committee will be co-chaired by Kelly Tornow, Associate General Counsel, and Joy Mischley, Director of Community Engagement and Service Learning.

Many thanks for your consideration,

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Carol Burton
Sent: Friday, May 8, 2026 4:06 PM
To: Melissa Wargo
Cc: Joy Mischley; Kelly Tornow
Subject: Polling Station Update

Melissa: Joy will be attending the Jackson County Board of Election meeting next week and report back to us.

Below is a list of the potential members for the Campus Voting Site Committee.

Note:

- Joy Mischley and Kelly Tornow are both on board as co-chairs (as are their supervisors).
- Judith Crawley in HHS Dean's Office will be the point of contact for Health and Human Sciences. She is aware and willing.
- Jenna Kubiak, CCESL, will be added as a resource because of her role with student voting and participating in the Jackson County Election Board meetings.
- Joy recommended we add someone from
    - Marketing/Communications for messaging, etc. Does Julia DuVall have capacity?
    - IT; she had Brian Foster in mind so I can approach Chris Williams for his support

---

Membership
Joy Mischley, Co-Chair, CCESL
Kelly Tornow, Co-Chair, Legal Counsel
Steve Lillard, University Police (appoint delegate given retirement)
Wes Taylor, University Center
Amanda Allen, Jackson County Board of Elections
Chelsea Revis, Parking
Chris Cooper, Haire Public Policy Institute
Christy Agner, External Affairs
Judith Caldwell, Health and Human Sciences
Jenna Kubiak, CCESL

cc Provost, Chief of Staff, CFO, VC SA, Chief Legal Counsel, CIO, Dean of HHS, Dean of A&S, Vice Provost

Draft of Email to be sent from Chancellor Brown

As you know, WCU has successfully offered a polling site on our campus for elections since 2015. This year, the Jackson County Board of Elections would like to consolidate all in-person polling in the Cullowhee precinct to one location for the mid-term's general election cycle (October 15- 31 and

November 3, respectively). The Board has requested the Health and Human Sciences Community Room 204 for this purpose. Our institutional commitment to civic engagement makes this a great fit with our mission. Therefore, I am reconstituting our Voting Site Committee to plan and manage the early voting and election day polling at HHS. Please accept this invitation to serve on the committee to be co-chaired by Kelly Tornow, Associate General Counsel, and Joy Mischley, Director of Community Engagement and Service Learning. Thank you for your willingness to serve.

Thanks,

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Friday, May 1, 2026 6:41 PM
To: Carol Burton
Subject: RE: Draft Email - Polling Station

I like the message and invitation. I think it will get better attention if it comes from Kelli and/or Richard. Let me know the full membership and when ready to send and we can tee that up.

Thanks!
M

Western Carolina University

Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Office of the Chancellor
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson, Suite 501
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7100 | c: (828) 399.1230 | wargo@wcu.edu

From: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, May 1, 2026 2:13 PM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: Draft Email - Polling Station

Melissa, please take a gander at below and let me know your thoughts. Richard is cool for it to be sent from him, or you and him, or Kelli and him, once finalized, with cc to Miller, Byers, etc. we can wait until the contract is signed before scheduling and insert something to that effect on the email. Can also revisit membership. Kelly T is fine to cochair with Joy. Thoughts?

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, May 1, 2026 1:26 PM
To: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: RE: Draft Email - Polling Station

Looks good to me. And Kelly is good as is Shea.

Best,

RDS

Richard D. Starnes
Provost & Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University
Cullowhee, NC 28723
(828) 227-7495

From: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, May 1, 2026 12:34 PM
To: Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Draft Email - Polling Station

For your reaction and edits...

As you know, WCU has successfully offered a polling site on our campus for elections since 2015. This year, the Jackson County Board of Elections would like to consolidate all in-person polling in the Cullowhee precinct to one location for the mid-term's general election cycle (October 15- 31 and November 3, respectively). The Board has requested the Health and Human Sciences Community Room 204 for this purpose. Our institutional commitment to civic engagement makes this a great fit with our mission. Therefore, I am reconstituting our Voting Site Committee to plan and manage the early voting and election day polling at HHS. Please accept this invitation to serve on the committee to be co-chaired by Kelly Tornow, Associate General Counsel, and Joy Mischley, Director of Community Engagement and Service Learning. Thank you for your willingness to serve.

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Carol Burton
Sent: Wednesday, April 22, 2026 9:09 AM
To: Richard Starnes; Melissa Wargo
Subject: Fw: Notes JCBOE Meeting 4.21.26
Attachments: JCBOE Meeting Notes 4.21.26.docx

YI.

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Jenna Kubiak <jkubiak@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, April 21, 2026 11:27 AM
To: Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>; Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>; Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Notes JCBOE Meeting 4.21.26

Hi all,

Attached are my notes from the Jackson County Board of Elections meeting today.

Main points for the HHS site, which they would like to include in the contract/agreement:

- Dates, hours, time
- Parking (20 spots)
- Specific signage
- They want us to move or cover the "do not enter" signs (not sure if this is possible)
- Rectangular tables and chairs in the room

They do not plan to take a vote until there is a signed agreement, which they hope to have by their next meeting on Wednesday, May 13th at 10 am (which is also during the leadership tour).

Please don't shoot the messenger (me) - so sorry I know this is a lot!

Best,
Jenna

Jenna Kubiak, MPA

Assistant Director of Civic & Community Engagement

Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning

Western Carolina University | Belk 273 (CCESL)

1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723

o: (828) 227.2842 | jkubiak@wcu.edu

Pronouns: she/her/hers

P.S. Check your NC voter registration status!

Book time to meet with me

JCBOE Meeting Notes 4.21.26

General updates

- 1 public comment, student Karl Ferm (SDC) addressed concern that BOE Chair suggested WCU students are not regular citizens of Jackson County.
- High turnout likely during midterm early voting, 60+ percent of the voters. Research from Dr. Cooper and elections center.
- I voted sticker contest with 250th birthday committee youth K-8 stickers! ☺
- NCSBE voted to move forward with SAVE database.
    - Looking to start making steps towards this in May – training, tool integration.
    - Process will have to be done by November. Higher burden on local BOEs.
    - Recommends directing people to state FAQ right now.
- "We do not have voter ID in this state because religious exemption" (Bill)
    - Expressed concern about approved IDs list such as WCU and county IDs approved for '25-'26 (Wes)
    - Amanda noted IDs already approved by current standards
    - Wes questioned if the standard has changed and if the list needs updating, such as having a CatCard and not being a citizen (international student).
    - They want to push the state board for this (Wes + Bill).

Voting plan discussion - WCU

- Amanda reached out to county attorney to draft contract, good faith effort.
- Include: dates/time/hours, specifics on signs, parking
- Bill concerned about "do not enter" signs "you have to have a PhD to understand it"
    - Wants us to move or cover these "do not enter" signs.
    - Jay and Wes noted that this is not actually that confusing but would also like to move/cover the "do not enter" signs just in case.
- Jay and Wes are excited about the site. Want the staff/closest spots possible.
- Roy asked if contract could include tables/chairs too. Prefers rectangular tables, not round tables.
- Board will not vote until everything is in writing and signed.

Other notes

- Next meeting (aim to have agreements done, will not vote without agreement): Wednesday, May 13th at 10:00 am. Recruitment & voting site on agenda.

Melissa Wargo

From: Kelly Tornow
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 8:28 AM
To: Melissa Wargo; Christy Agner
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections - Midterm Elections Polling Site Update

Great, thank you both! Very helpful.

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 3:23 PM
To: Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>; Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections - Midterm Elections Polling Site Update

I brought this up at executive council this morning, and everybody is aware that we will need to pull together and do what needs done to ensure that we meet the expectations around having a voting side back on campus. The Chancellor made it clear that she wants to have this voting sign back on campus if possible. Everyone was positive this morning and willing to pitch in.

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 2:50 PM
To: Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: RE: Jackson County Board of Elections - Midterm Elections Polling Site Update

Thanks Kelly,

It is my understanding that WCU would, similar to the practices employed during the last 10 years of operating a voting site, engage the respective advisory committee to ensure criteria set out by the BOE staff are met. Given our long partnership with the BOE on operation of an Early Voting site, I know of no current barriers to meeting the site criteria.

While the site under consideration is different from the previous site, there might be some work for the committee to review differing parking and signage needs for EV vs ED. The campaigning zone should be consistent for ED / EV, if I understand state statutes correctly.

On the 'other considerations' I am aware CCESL is actively researching those answers with the goal of moving information (permitting, network quality,)

Hope that is helpful!

Christy Agner
Western Carolina University

From: Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 2:12 PM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: Jackson County Board of Elections - Midterm Elections Polling Site Update

Following up with the two of you on this — I just didn't want to leave Amanda hanging but wasn't sure who had talked to whom at this point. Thanks!

From: Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Thursday, April 9, 2026 8:47 AM
To: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>; Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>; Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections - Midterm Elections Polling Site Update

Amanda, the Jackson County elections director, contacted Joy and me yesterday to begin discussing logistics if the Board decides to consolidate the two Cullowhee sites into a single WCU location at HHS. The Board has requested a site agreement or contract outlining use of HHS, and Amanda would like to share additional information with the Board ahead of its April 21 meeting.

Under state law, a county board of elections may require the use of any building "supported or maintained, in whole or in part, by or through tax revenues" as a voting site. In practice, however, this authority is typically exercised with substantial input from the entity operating the facility, and I have rarely seen a county board compel use if building operators indicate it is not feasible.

Here are some additional factors Amanda mentioned:

- Early Voting is Oct. 15-31, 2026
- EV hours for voters will be Mon-Fri 8am-7:30pm and Saturdays 10/24 & 10/31 8am-3pm. Workers will need access to the space for an hour before and an hour after voting hours.
- Setup would need to occur Wed. Oct. 14
- Election Day is Tues. Nov 3 - ideally, we would swap most of the equipment at the close of EV and finishing touches on 11/2.
- ED hours for voters are 6:30am-7:30pm. Workers need access to the space an hour before and an hour after voting hours.
- Jackson Co. Public Works would pick up election supplies on the morning of Wednesday 11/4.

Other considerations she mentioned needing:

- Clarification on network access, quality etc.
- Guarantees related to designated parking (In the fall, Parking offered 20-30 designated spaces)
- Information about security of the space - keys, access etc.
- Clarification on campaign zones, if parties have to apply (I believe they did when they'd be outside the UC) and sign placement on campus

How would you all like to proceed with these conversations?

Sincerely,
Kelly

From: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, April 8, 2026 11:20 AM
To: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>; Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Jackson County Board of Elections - Midterm Elections Polling Site Update

All: the Jackson County Board of Elections met yesterday to consider early and day of voting for the midterms this fall. Please see the attached notes from Jenna Kubiak in CCESL, who attended the meeting, along with three WCU students.

As you can imagine, if the Board's preliminary proposal moves forward and HHS is the preferred site, there are many steps to take, particularly around institutional commitment and voting logistics.

The Board must submit official plans for the polling site(s) by July 24th, 2026.

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

Jackson County Board of Elections (JCBOE)

Meeting Notes 4.7.26: Consideration of Polling Sites for the 2026 Midterm Elections

Submitted by Jenna Kubiak, Assistant Director of Civic and Community Engagement CCESL, WCU

Summary Outcome: Possible consensus by the Jackson County Board of Elections to use HHS Community Room if available and needs such as parking and signage are met and if the university is still willing to use this site. Next step is to confer with Provost, Chief of Staff, Dean Anderson, Associate Counsel Tornow, and others.

- Early voting plans MUST be decided and submitted to the State Elections Board by July 24th.
- Bill Thompson (Chair of Jackson County Elections Board) deferred the final decision to the board but gave only 3 possible options including:
    - Jackson County Recreation Center (smaller room); would like this to be used in the general election to have it in the same place.
    - The Jackson County Recreation Center also has the large "party room" in the back which is better for space, but the Rec Center is unwilling to use this for all of early voting.
    - Also considering the HHS building at WCU. Bill suggested that it is not ideal due to parking concerns.
    - Not willing to consider the University Center despite using it in the past as the board is committed to polling site consolidation.

Main points regarding using HHS:

- Amanda Allen (Director of Jackson County Elections) suggested exploring student parking ushers; adequate signage; would request 20-30 parking spaces. Noted that 20 is more than enough.
- HHS is bigger than Cullowhee Rec according to Roy Osborne, member of the Jackson County Board of Elections; there are no windows, so it can be used for voting machines.

- Director to provide all policies/agreement for voting site rules. County attorney will send site agreements to all sites. WCU already has a template from the past site.
- Request in writing agreement that we generally can use the HHS building for the future elections (Chair Thompson).
- Parking helpers/volunteers especially might be helpful on Election Day; not as much of a concern during early voting.
- Board will take a vote after contracts/agreements are done for ALL sites in the county. Amanda was in contact with Kelly Tornow at WCU already about this and it seems we have done so in the past with the UC site.
- Data analysis by the board staff showed that HHS would be a good site.
- Board members noted a staffing concern for poll workers and that perhaps university students could help fill this gap.

HOURS

- Open last two Saturdays of early voting Oct 15-31st M-F 8 am – 7:30 pm, last 2 Saturdays are 8 am – 3 pm. Election Day November 3rd. Access before/after.

  Note: I recommend that if plans move forward, HHS Community Room be reserved from October 14-November 4th with key access. (Carol B.)

  Logistics including housekeeping, room fees, set up, etc., would be needed to ensure success. The previous committee that handled logistics for early polling e.g., Parking, Housekeeping, CCESSL Staff, Police, Legal Counsel, etc.,) would be engaged to oversee this year's elections, with additional input from HHS and others, as needed.

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 3:35 PM
To: Chris Williams; Christy Agner
Subject: Re: HHS internet

Thanks, Chris! Christy and I are in the loop. The chancellor's made it plain this morning that we're all going to need to support this effort to get a polling place back on campus. Kenny can fill you in on the conversation we had at exec council this morning.

Thanks!
M

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Chris Williams <cjwilliams@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 3:23:19 PM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: HHS internet

Not sure who needs to be aware of this, although you may already know.

Chris

Chris Williams, MBA
Chief Information Officer

Office of the CIO
Western Carolina University | 106B Cordelia Camp
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7282 | cio@wcu.edu

From: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 3:02 PM
To: Brian Foster <fosterb@email.wcu.edu>; Chris Williams <cjwilliams@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: HHS internet

Hi Chris and Brian,

I hope that your week is off to a good start.

The Director of the Jackson County Board of Elections has reached out to share that a number of board members are interested in moving the Cullowhee voting site to the HHS building, starting this fall. Though it has not yet been decided, it sounds like they will take a vote after contracts are drafted for all of the Jackson County voting sites. Kelly Turnow in Legal is working on this.

Would you be able to share with me the relevant specifics of the network for room 204 in HHS? I'm not entirely certain what would be needed to include, but imagine the network speed and how the Board of Elections staff would access the network.

Thank you. Please let me know if you have any further questions and I'll do my best to get an answer.

My best,
Joy

Western Carolina University

Joy Mischley, MSW, LCSW
Director
Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
Western Carolina University | 273 Belk
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2643 | jmischley@wcu.edu
Pronouns: she/her/hers

From: Brian Foster <fosterb@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 3:30 PM
To: Chris Williams <cjwilliams@email.wcu.edu>; Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: HHS internet

Chris is correct; the network in the HHS building is the same as the UC building . The only difference is the brand of wireless access points in the UC, but the networks and bandwidth are the same in HHS as the UC.

Brian

Brian Foster
IT Director, Networking and Communications

Information Technology
Western Carolina University | B16 Forsyth Bldg.
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.3212 | fosterb@wcu.edu

From: Chris Williams <cjwilliams@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 2:25 PM
To: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Brian Foster <fosterb@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: RE: HHS internet

Hi Joy. I've copied our Director of Networking, but in these shared/public spaces the networking is the same everywhere. During a special event, we can also change the networking setup to behave however we need to.

Chris

Chris Williams, MBA
Chief Information Officer

Office of the CIO
Western Carolina University | 106B Cordelia Camp
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7282 | cio@wcu.edu

From: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2026 2:24 PM
To: Chris Williams <cjwilliams@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: HHS internet

Hi Chris,

Hope that you are well and excited for some snow!

I wasn't quite sure how to find out the answer to the question below. Would you be able to provide an answer or point me in the right direction?

"Regarding the HHS building, is the "connectivity comparable to the multipurpose room in the Hinds Center?"

This question is from the Jackson County Board of Elections- they are wanting to be extra certain that the network security/specs are comparable in the large multipurpose room at the HHS Building to what they've received in the UC multipurpose room in the past.

The polling site has been moved to the Jackson County Cullowhee Rec Center for the Primaries, but I understand that Board Members are wanting to know this information in case that changes in the future.

Thank you!

My best,
Joy

Western Carolina University

VOTING is Social Work

WNC MOUNTAIN LIFE

Joy Mischley, MSW, LCSW

Director

Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
Western Carolina University | 273 Belk
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2643 | jmischley@wcu.edu
Pronouns: she/her/hers

Melissa Wargo

From: Melissa Wargo
Sent: Monday, March 30, 2026 9:55 AM
To: Carol Burton; Lori Anderson; Richard Starnes
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

Thanks Carol!

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Monday, March 30, 2026 7:33:08 AM
To: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

Election Day is Tuesday, November 3rd.
I assume once the Board of Elections meets, tomorrow morning, Amanda Allen will contact Joy and she will let me know if there is a formal request to host the polling site. I will pass on since that is an institutional decision.

Thanks,

carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Sunday, March 29, 2026 7:19 PM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>; Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

I am thinking we should just take 204 offline at this point. Early voting is Oct 15-31. Currently, nothing outside of the holds that I have on the room for Mondays is on the calendar. We could go ahead and block October 12-31 at this point until we know for sure. That way we are not having to cancel and move folks around. Thoughts?

Lori Anderson, PhD, RN
Dean and Professor
College of Health and Human Sciences
Western Carolina University | HHS
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7271 | landerson@wcu.edu
College Website

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From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Date: Friday, March 27, 2026 at 5:21 PM
To: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>, Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>, Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

Thanks Carol. If they decide that the location on our campus works, we will need to be prepared to say yes. Especially given all the hubbub in the fall about taking away our early voting site.

Thanks!
M

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, March 27, 2026 3:19:05 PM
To: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>; Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

Thanks, Carol!

Get Outlook for iOS

From: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, March 27, 2026 4:47:51 PM
To: Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

Richard (and Lori and Melissa): I wanted to provide an update on the polling location conversations in Cullowhee following the suspension of our polling site at WCU recently. The Jackson County Board of Elections Director, Amanda Allen, contacted Joy Mischley in CCESL this week to let her know that at the upcoming board meeting next week, they would be discussing location of the polling station for mid-terms (early and election day) voting this October and November, 2026. She indicated that the board

members realize that the Jackson County Recreation Center polling site may be inadequate to accommodate mid-term elections voting and that they are interested in checking other sites. The Health and Human Sciences Building remains of interest to them, she said. We are simply responding to queries but I wanted this on your radar in case a formal request is proposed to house the mid terms voting for this precinct. Jenna Kubiak in CCESL will attend the Board of Elections' meeting on Tuesday and report back. I will follow up with you then.

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Richard Starnes
Sent: Monday, March 30, 2026 9:20 AM
To: Melissa Wargo; Lori Anderson; Carol Burton
Subject: RE: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

Concur

Best,

RDS
Richard D. Starnes
Provost & Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University
Cullowhee, NC 28723
(828) 227-7495

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Sunday, March 29, 2026 7:21 PM
To: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>; Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>; Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

I think that's a good proactive move, Lori. Thanks! Can always release if it doesn't pan out.

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Sunday, March 29, 2026 5:19:37 PM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>; Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

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Dean and Professor
College of Health and Human Sciences
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From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Date: Friday, March 27, 2026 at 5:21 PM
To: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>, Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>, Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

Thanks Carol. If they decide that the location on our campus works, we will need to be prepared to say yes. Especially given all the hubbub in the fall about taking away our early voting site.

Thanks!
M

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

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Cc: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

Thanks, Carol!

Get Outlook for iOS

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Sent: Friday, March 27, 2026 4:47:51 PM
To: Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
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Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Carol Burton
Sent: Monday, March 30, 2026 8:46 AM
To: Lori Anderson; Melissa Wargo
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

Thanks Lori. I have inquired about the Board of Elections' plan for the actual election day. We have never hosted polling on election day but their deliberations and request may include changing sites altogether.

carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Sunday, March 29, 2026 7:19 PM
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From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Date: Friday, March 27, 2026 at 5:21 PM
To: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>, Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>, Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

Thanks Carol. If they decide that the location on our campus works, we will need to be prepared to say yes. Especially given all the hubbub in the fall about taking away our early voting site.

Thanks!
M

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Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

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Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

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Get Outlook for iOS

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Cc: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
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Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Carol Burton
Sent: Friday, March 27, 2026 6:49 PM
To: Melissa Wargo
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

Even funnier! Enjoy your w weekend at AGB.

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, March 27, 2026 5:39:52 PM
To: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

I figured I'd cut that off at the pass! No fucks shall be given today!

—-
Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Chief External Affairs Officer
Western Carolina University

From: Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, March 27, 2026 3:39:11 PM
To: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

From: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, March 27, 2026 5:21:38 PM
To: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>; Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>; Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

Thanks Carol. If they decide that the location on our campus works, we will need to be prepared to say yes. Especially given all the hubbub in the fall about taking away our early voting site.

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Melissa Canady Wargo, Ph.D.
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Cc: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Jackson County Board of Elections Polling Sites

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Cc: Lori Anderson <landerson@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
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Carol

Carol Burton
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Jessica Woods
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 9:04 AM
To: Kelli Brown
Cc: Melissa Wargo; Joyce Carpenter; Madyson Hayes
Subject: Chancellor's BOT Remarks
Attachments: Chancellor's BOT Remarks_March 2026.docx

Good morning Chancellor Brown,

Attached please find a copy of your remarks for the BOT meeting on Friday, March 6th.

Thanks,

FILL THE WESTERN SKY THE CAMPAIGN for WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Jessica M. Woods '18
Assistant to the Chancellor and
Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees
Chancellor's Office
Western Carolina University | 501 HF Robinson
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.3044 | c: (828) 506.5900 | jmwoods@wcu.edu
westernsky.wcu.edu

Chancellor Remarks
Board of Trustees Meeting
March 6, 2026

Welcome

- Good morning!
- Welcome to everyone here in person and participating via livestream today.
- This is our first trustee meeting of the 2026 calendar year, and I hope you all had a wonderful start to the new year.
- As is typical, Spring semester got off to a very busy start! Now let me now dive into some specific updates of interest.

Enrollment

- Census Date has passed, and our spring enrollment figures look strong.
- Enrollment overall is up 1.5% compared to spring enrollment last year, with a total of 11,095 students this semester. This is good news!
- Particularly strong is our enrollment of continuing students. Our Fall to Spring retention is a robust 91.6%.

- This is a great leading indicator of strong persistence of our freshman for next fall.
- And strong persistence metrics don't just happen by accident. They are the result of hard work by our faculty and our professional staff.
- Kudos to each of our faculty and staff for their efforts in supporting our students.
- You should be proud of this metric, I know I am.

General Campus Updates

- Website Redesign
    - As you heard at Governance and Trusteeship yesterday, on February 4, we launched the newly redesigned WCU website.
    - This is the first major overhaul of the website in over ten years, and the updated design offers a new look, improved navigation, more modern security features, and a better experience for prospective students, current students, faculty, and staff.

- The launch went smoothly, but as you might expect, with a website of nearly 5,000 pages handled by over 200 department web editors, we do have pages that need additional attention, and some users may encounter issues that we have not been made aware of. Please don't hesitate to let us know if you run into anything that needs attention.
- I'm very grateful to our web team and the many web editors across campus for their work on this project.

[Applause]

- Economic Impact Newsletter
  - I hope you saw my email in January about WCU's economic impact.
  - Last spring, as you know, we solicited an outside study to evaluate WCU's economic impact on the region and the State of North Carolina.
  - The results from the study were beyond impressive - clearly WCU is a major catalyst for economic and community development in Western North Carolina

and beyond. To convert every $1 investment into a return of $5.61 is a tremendous ROI!

- And, at your recommendation, we worked to further share this incredible news with campus partners across the region and state.
- Without question, Western's position in the community plays a significant role in driving the regional and state economy in terms of jobs and economic output.
- To continue spreading this good news, we have also provided you each a couple of copies of the study summary to share with any interested person.

- Campus Voting Site
  - In an update on the early voting site here on the WCU campus, you may recall that the NC State Board of Elections upheld the decision by the Jackson County Board of Elections to not renew our early voting site.
  - In the wake of that decision, students from WCU, NC A&T, and UNC Greensboro filed suit and requested an injunction to hold up that decision.

- Unfortunately, U.S. District Judge William Osteen denied the students' request for an injunction.
- To ensure that WCU students had safe and convenient access to vote, WCU ran a week-day shuttle to and from the early voting site at the Cullowhee Recreation Center. We also ran an Election Day shuttle to and from the polls. Ensuring this access fulfills WCU's commitment to promoting student civic engagement in the democratic process.
- WCU remains committed to hosting a voting site here on campus should the County or State Board reevaluate their decision for this fall's general election.

BOG Updates

- Since our last Trustee meeting in December, the Board of Governors met in January and again last week on February 25-26.
- In January, the BOG reviewed 2026–27 tuition and fee proposals submitted by UNC System institutions and

brought the proposals back to the table in February for a vote.

- WCU proposed a few small fee increases, but as you know, we are an NC Promise campus, so our tuition is statutorily set by the NC General Assembly.
- BOG members engaged in robust discussion about the proposed tuition and fee increases and, in the end, voted to approve the full slate.
- We will work with the System Office to ensure that an increase to NC Promise Buydown will be adjusted based on the average approved increases from the non-NC Promise campuses.
- The BOG also considered in January proposed amendments to Section VI of The Code, Academic Freedom and Tenure, providing a practical working definition to guide faculty, staff and students. The Board requested more time for feedback, and, last week, the Board discussed and approved a revised set of amendments defining Academic Freedom.
- Provost Starnes will be working with our faculty to ensure broad communication of the new policy.

- And, in good news for WCU, the BOG last week approved our new Master's of Science in Engineering.
- We are very excited about this program approval. The program was made possible by the generosity of the NC General Assembly last year to fund expansion of WCU's programs in the College of Engineering.
- This is good news for workforce development in Western North Carolina, and it reflects the excellent ROI that WCU has made with this state investment.
- I'm so grateful to our legislators and advocates, including you around this table, for helping make that investment happen.

Faculty Realignment Incentive Program

- In January, Provost Starnes announced that WCU will be implementing a new program this spring, the Faculty Realignment Incentive Program.
- In 2023, the University of North Carolina System created the Faculty Realignment Incentive Program (FRIP) to provide a mechanism for "UNC System constituent institutions to offer retirement incentives to faculty who have played a vital role

on their campus and will assist institutions in proactively planning for successful faculty transitions into retirement."

- The FRIP program is completely voluntary, and final decisions on participation in the program are at the discretion of the university.
- I applaud the work of Provost Starnes, Dr. Cory Causby in Human Resources, and staff in the Office of the Provost for shepherding the program and ensuring a successful rollout.
- This is exactly the type of strategic, proactive planning that allows WCU to use its limited resources more efficiently and effectively.

AI on Campus

- I also want to take a few minutes this morning to update you on Western Carolina University's rapidly expanding leadership in artificial intelligence—both within the UNC System and across our region.
- AI is reshaping higher education, workforce needs, and the broader economy, and WCU is positioning itself not just to keep pace, but to lead.

- First, WCU is playing a central role in the UNC System's AI strategy. We are hosting the development of the new statewide AI literacy course, which is currently in pilot and expected to launch this fall.
- Ian Selig **[sell-ig]** from our Division of IT is the only representative from the western region on the 10-member design team, and our Educational Technologies staff are supporting the course's development and distribution.
- Across our colleges, faculty are integrating AI into the classroom in meaningful ways.
- The College of Arts and Sciences has faculty participating in a year-long national AI institute.
- The Coulter Faculty Commons continues to lead professional development, helping faculty design assignments that encourage students to think critically about AI outputs rather than simply consume them.
- We also offered an AI-focused, first-year experience course this past fall, and faculty across campus are studying how students perceive and use AI in their learning.

- One of our most exciting initiatives is led by Dr. Abdallah Abdallah **[ab-DAL-lah ab-DAL-lah]** in Engineering and Technology. He recently received a $35,000 UNC System Undergraduate Research Program Award that immerses students directly in applied AI research.
- AI is also transforming our administrative operations.
- The Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness has developed an AI-powered workflow that integrates multiple data streams into a single weekly Strategic Enrollment Management report.
- The Advancement staff is piloting an AI fundraising agent called Maddie, which has already generated more than $31,000 in donations.
- And the Registrar Office is implementing an AI Transcript Tool to accelerate transfer credit evaluations.
- WCU is also helping shape AI education and workforce development across Western North Carolina, in our community colleges, and K–12 schools.

- Additionally, our IT division is partnering with the Center for Community Engagement to offer AI workshops to local businesses and nonprofits.
- In short, WCU is not waiting for the future of AI—we are helping to shape it.

Performance Metrics

- I also want to keep my commitment to you as a Board to update you on our campus performance relative to the core and campus-selected metrics in the UNC performance funding model.
- This past year we met all but one of our performance goals. As a reminder, our metrics revolve around 4-year graduation rates, student debt (for new and transfer students), undergraduate degree efficiency (that is, the number of degrees awarded per 100 FTE students), education and related expenses per degree (this is the one we fell slightly short), and STEM and health-related degrees awarded.

- Our four-year graduation rate, at 51%, exceeded both our threshold and stretch goals.
- This reflects better academic momentum, stronger advising and student support, and focused efforts on timely degree completion.
- Degree efficiency also improved, reflecting our success in getting students across the stage at graduation, particularly those students in STEM and health fields.
- And, of course, you've heard me on many occasions discuss our success related to reduction of student debt.
- Average student debt at graduation declined significantly over the past three years.
- This improvement reflects targeted financial aid strategies, improved degree efficiency, and a continued commitment to affordability for our students and families.
- The area we are still diving into is the metric related to our Educational and related expenditures per degree. We have seen a slight increase in those expenditures coming at the same time as the smaller classes from the COVID cohorts

reach graduation. The convergence of these trends caused us to just miss the mark on this metric.

- But we are still reviewing our investments in instruction, student services, and research and ensuring that those are translating into measurable student outcomes.
- Overall, these results demonstrate effective stewardship of institutional resources.
- Meeting the goals for all but one of our performance metrics is an incredible achievement for WCU, and I know we are striving to meet all our performance metrics in the coming year.

University Accolades

- Allow me to conclude my remarks today with a few highlights of exciting recognitions and things happening across campus now. Many of these reflect WCU's commitment to Invest in its People.
- First, WCU faculty member, Dr. Lisa Lefler, who has worked with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians tribe for over 20 years advancing native health and wellness, was recently

named an honorary member of the EBCI. Incredibly proud of this special recognition!

- Also, in December, WCU forensic anthropology students assisted the Durham Police Department by locating the remains of a person missing since 2023. What a great experience for our students to be a part of helping bring closure for a family after serval years of not knowing what happened to their loved one!
- Additionally, Martin Tanaka, a professor of engineering and technology, recently received $1 million worth of funding from NC Innovation to develop an innovative device to treat lymphedema **[lim-fuh-DEE-muh]**, a complication that can affect cancer patients, most commonly those battling breast cancer, and people recovering from other major surgeries.
- And finally, we recently announced the name of the new media center in the Western Skybox, the Steve White Media Center, named after our most celebrated, retired sports information director. I'm excited about this new development and I'm looking forward to when the skybox and media center are finished!

Closing

- As always, I thank each of you for the support you provide to Western Carolina University.
- Mr. Chairman, that concludes my remarks and I'm happy to take any questions.

Melissa Wargo

From: Christopher Cooper
Sent: Sunday, March 1, 2026 9:44 PM
To: Richard Starnes; Kelly Tornow; Christy Agner; Melissa Wargo; Carol Burton; Jenna Kubiak; Kelli Brown; David Kinner
Subject: Re: NC Primary tracker sheet
Attachments: nc_2026_primary_tracker.html; nc_2026_primary_tracker.pdf

THIS EMAIL CONTAINS A POTENTIALLY HARMFUL ATTACHMENT. PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU ARE EXPECTING THIS ATTACHMENT FROM A TRUSTED SENDER BEFORE OPENING IT, AS ATTACHMENTS ARE KNOWN TO CONTAIN MALWARE/VIRUSES.
Sorry to spam you twice, but I had a couple of typos in the last one and I can't let a mistake sit without correction (or, I could but I'd prefer not to).

Please see attached for a version with a couple of corrections.

If you deleted the last one, please delete this one with the same spirit

Chris

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From: Christopher Cooper <ccooper@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Sunday, March 1, 2026 7:37 PM
To: Richard Starnes <starnes@email.wcu.edu>; Kelly Tornow <ktornow@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Carol Burton <burton@email.wcu.edu>; Jenna Kubiak <jkubiak@email.wcu.edu>; Kelli Brown <kbrown@email.wcu.edu>; David Kinner <dkinner@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: NC Primary tracker sheet

Hi all,

I made a sheet to track Tuesday night's primaries. I originally made it for my students, then I thought perhaps a few of my political nerd friends and colleagues (that's you--and I mean that as a complement) might also be interested. It's certainly not a definitive list or anything—just my take on some of the more interesting and important elections to watch statewide.

See attached if you're interested (the two copies are identical—it's just that one is html and one is pdf). Delete with no guilt if not.

And, if you know someone else who might be interested, please forward it on. I don't think I'm going to make it public in any real sense, but if it's helpful to a few more people, all the better.

Chris

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North Carolina 2026 Primary Elections

Some elections to watch · Primary Day: March 3, 2026

Compiled by Chris Cooper
from various sources
(see bottom for sources)
Primary Day: March 3, 2026

THE BASICS How voting works in this primary

① VOTE BY MAIL

Request deadline: Feb. 21
Completed ballots must be returned to the county board of elections by **March 3 at 7:30 pm** — either in person or by mail (postmark alone is not sufficient).
Exception — UOCAVA voters (active military & overseas citizens): ballots postmarked by March 3 are accepted through **March 10**.

② EARLY IN-PERSON

Feb. 12 – Feb. 28
Voters may cast a ballot at any early voting site in their county. Same-day registration was available throughout the period.
Early voting ended Saturday.

③ ELECTION DAY

Tuesday, March 3, 2026
Polls open **6:30 am – 7:30 pm**. Voters must cast their ballot at their assigned precinct — unlike early voting, Election Day voting is precinct-specific.

SECOND PRIMARY

NC requires a candidate to clear **30%** to win outright. If no one does, the second-place finisher may request a runoff.
Runoff election date: **May 12, 2026**.

THE BIG FIVE The marquee primaries of the cycle — 5 races

STATE SENATE · DISTRICT 26 · ROCKINGHAM/GUILFORD — R Primary

★State Senate District 26 (R)

☐ **Phil Berger** *Senate President Pro Tem, 24 yrs* ☐ **Sam Page** *Rockingham Co. Sheriff*

As Casey Kasem would say: number one with a bullet. Berger was first elected in 2000, became President Pro-Tem of the Senate in 2011, and in the intervening years has become the most powerful politician in NC. Berger has the Trump endorsement — but Trump has also called Page "GREAT" and praised both men as "outstanding people," an unusual hedge. Page, a longtime Rockingham County sheriff, entered the race despite arm-twisting from party leadership and a Trump request to drop out. The cash disparities are substantial — Berger has raised more than 40 times as much money as Page in direct expenditures, to say nothing of indirect expenditures. But there's still a chance Page wins. Early voting heavily favored Rockingham County (generally considered better for Page), despite the fact that Guilford has more registered voters. If Page wins, it will go down as the most important General Assembly primary in NC history — and arguably, in NC history, period.

Rockingham 67% of R votes so far · $1.6M vs $29K candidate $ · $3.8M outside pro-Berger Trump endorsement

1ST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT · NORTHEASTERN NC — R Primary

★1st Congressional District (R)

☐ **Laurie Buckhout** *Army vet, briefly worked in Trump admin; lost to Davis by ~2K in 2024* ☐ **Bobby Hanig** *State Sen., Currituck Co.*
☐ **Eric Rouse** *Lenoir County Commissioner* ☐ **Asa Buck** *Carteret Co. Sheriff* ☐ **Ashley-Nicole Russell** *Divorce attorney*

Mid-decade redistricting moved NC-1 — currently held by Democrat Don Davis — from a toss-up to a Republican lean. Buckhout — who briefly worked in the Trump administration — enters with a significant cash advantage, funded largely by a personal loan to her own campaign. Trump has not endorsed in this race. All four leading candidates bring some profile to the race: Buckhout ran here in 2022, Buck has served as sheriff, Rouse is a county commissioner, and Hanig is a sitting state senator. An Emerson poll had Buckhout and Buck as the leaders, but the poll misidentified Hanig. Winner faces Rep. Don Davis (D) in what could be one of the fall's most competitive NC races.

New favorable map · 5-person field

4TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT · DURHAM/TRIANGLE — D Primary

★4th Congressional District (D)

☐ **Valerie Foushee** *Incumbent, backed by Cooper, Stein, others* ☐ **Nida Allam** *Durham Co. Commissioner, backed by Sanders*
☐ **Mary Patterson** *Longshot*

Foushee is the incumbent in this rematch of the 2022 primary for the same seat, albeit under different district lines. Allam carried Durham before; now Durham dominates. Allam raised ~$334K while Foushee took in ~$140K — but outside money far exceeds the direct expenditures, making it perhaps the most expensive primary in NC history. Allam has secured the endorsement of Bernie Sanders; Foushee has the endorsement of the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People. Key fault lines: Gaza, Israel, immigration. Allam is the first Muslim woman elected in NC.

Rematch, new map · $270K+ Hogg/Allam · $430K+ Foushee outside $ · Dem safe in fall

HOUSE DISTRICT 106 · MECKLENBURG — D Primary

★House District 106 (D)

☐ **Carla Cunningham** *Incumbent, conservative Dem* ☐ **Rev. Rodney Sadler** *Challenger, Gov. Stein-backed*
☐ **Vermanno Bowman** *Lost to Cunningham by 69 pts in 2024*

Cunningham is a conservative Dem who voted with Rs on veto overrides and made comments on immigration that sparked party backlash. The state party has withheld VoteBuilder from Cunningham. Bowman's presence in the race may divide the anti-Cunningham vote, which would work in the incumbent's favor. Winner cruises in November — but outcome matters for veto override math.

veto override

HOUSE DISTRICT 27 · NORTHAMPTON/HALIFAX — D Primary

★House District 27 (D)

☐ **Rodney Pierce** *Incumbent, Stein-backed* ☐ **Michael Wray** *Former rep, lost 2024 by narrowest primary margin in state*

A rematch of the 2024 primary where Pierce bested Wray by the ridiculously narrow margin of 34 votes. Wray was known as a conservative Democrat when in office — willing to break with his party when he saw fit. Pierce is endorsed by Gov. Josh Stein.

Rematch · veto override · Former legislator running

OTHER FEDERAL 2 races

U.S. SENATE — R Primary

★U.S. Senate (R)

Michael Whatley *Former RNC Chairman, Trump-backed* · **Don Brown** *Former Navy JAG, main anti-establishment alternative*
Michele Morrow *Conservative activist, 2024 surprise primary winner* · **Margot Dupre** · **Richard Dansie** · **Elizabeth A. Temple** · **Thomas Johnson**

Whatley is the clear establishment favorite with Trump's backing. Morrow, who was the surprise winner of the Superintendent of Public Instruction primary in 2024, is hoping to mobilize the grassroots but has had little support in the polls. Much of the anti-establishment energy that lifted Morrow in 2024 has shifted to Brown, and some of her former allies — even people who worked on her last campaign — have publicly broken with her. Whatley is the heavy favorite — the only real question is what the margin of victory is.

vs. Gov. Cooper (D) in fall · Trump endorsement

11TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT · WESTERN NC — D Primary

11th Congressional District (D)

Jamie Ager *Farmer/businessman; grandfather held this seat in the 1980s; 4x cash lead, DCCC-backed* · **Paul Maddox** *Cancer researcher*
Richard Hudspeth *Former CEO, UNC Blue Ridge Health* · **Zelda Briarwood** *Party activist* · **Lee Whipple** *Civil engineer*

Hoping to flip this district that has been in Republican hands since 2012. Ager is heavily favored with 4x the cash of all opponents combined. This is a pickup attempt in R-friendly mountain territory against Rep. Chuck Edwards. The DCCC has backed Ager, sparking complaints from other candidates.

Helene recovery · DCCC-backed: Ager · R-lean district

OTHER GENERAL ASSEMBLY RACES TO WATCH

State House 11 races

HOUSE DISTRICT 1 · CHOWAN/CURRITUCK/DARE (PARTIAL)/PERQUIMANS/TYRRELL/WASHINGTON — R Primary

House District 1 (R)

Ed Goodwin *Four-term incumbent; chairs Agriculture Appropriations and Homeland Security committees*
John Spruill *Washington County Commissioner; background in criminal justice and construction*

Goodwin, a Chowan County native and former Naval Criminal Investigative Service agent, has held the seat since 2019. Spruill is the Washington County Commission chair and a fire chief — he's running on rural infrastructure, broadband, and healthcare access. Safe R in the fall.

Incumbent vs. county commissioner · Rural NE NC

HOUSE DISTRICT 37 · WAKE COUNTY — D Primary

House District 37 (D)

Winn Decker *Education policy consultant* · **Marcus Gadson** *UNC-Chapel Hill law professor* · **Ralph Clements** *Health care consultant*

One of a handful of viable Dem pickup opportunities in the fall. Rep. Pare won by 6 pts in 2024 — competitive but not a gimme. Nominee would need a blue wave. Primary determines which Dem gets that shot.

Pickup opportunity

HOUSE DISTRICT 60 · HIGH POINT/GUILFORD — D Primary

House District 60 (D) — Open

Amanda Cook *High Point City Councilwoman (appointed incumbent)* · **Angie Williams-McMichael** *Former charter school teacher*
Joe Alston *Former Guilford Co. Dem Party chair* · **Bruce Davis** *Former Guilford Co. Commissioner*

Seat vacated after Rep. Cecil Brockman resigned following arrest on charges involving sexual offenses against minors. Local Dems named Cook to fill the vacancy, but she must win a competitive primary. D-safe in fall.

open seat

HOUSE DISTRICT 79 · BEAUFORT — R Primary

House District 79 (R)

Keith Kidwell *Incumbent, House Freedom Caucus leader* · **Darren Armstrong** *Farmer/businessman, backed by Dixon & Troxler*

Kidwell leads the House Freedom Caucus and pressed colleagues to kill the shrimp trawling bill, along with other prominent conservative positions. Agriculture Committee Chair Dixon openly recruited Armstrong — Kidwell says it stems from his opposition to a pesticide liability farm bill provision. Classic establishment vs. insurgent.

HOUSE DISTRICT 90 · SURRY/WILKES — R Primary

House District 90 (R) — Open

A.J. Daoud *Lost 2024 state treasurer primary* · **Dan Kiger** *Veteran State Highway Patrol trooper* · **Paul Barker** *Former Chief Deputy, Surry Co. Sheriff's Office*

This is a race to fill the seat currently occupied by Sarah Stevens, who has announced for NC Supreme Court. AJ Daoud has strong name recognition thanks to his recent run for NC Treasurer, but this one is considered up for grabs.

open seat

HOUSE DISTRICT 95 · IREDELL — R Primary

House District 95 (R)

Todd Carver *Incumbent ($11K cash)* · **Mike Kubiniec** *School board member ($7K cash)*

Kubiniec was involved in a 2023 texting scandal (possible open meetings law violations) and a profanity-laced scuffle with the school board chair. Carver is the favorite but Kubiniec is no stranger to contentious battles.

HOUSE DISTRICT 99 · MECKLENBURG — D Primary

House District 99 (D)

Nasif Majeed *Incumbent, no VoteBuilder access* · **Tucker Neal** *UNC Charlotte student* · **Veleria Levy** *CEO, HerHealth Consulting*

Majeed missed the initial vote on legislation restricting gender-affirming care and library book access, then cast the vote that gave Republicans the margin they needed to override Stein's veto. The party has denied Majeed VoteBuilder — similar to what they did for Cunningham. Two first-time challengers could split the progressive vote and help Majeed survive.

`veto override`

HOUSE DISTRICT 110 · GASTON — R Primary

House District 110 (R)

Kelly Hastings *Incumbent since 2010, initially said he wouldn't run* · **Caroline Eason** *PharmD, UNC-Chapel Hill — outraised Hastings*

Hastings announced retirement then reversed course. Eason jumped in with energy and outraised him — the two entered 2026 with comparable sums. Young, hungry challenger vs. 16-year incumbent.

HOUSE DISTRICT 113 · POLK/WESTERN NC — R Primary

House District 113 (R)

Jake Johnson *Incumbent, Deputy Majority Whip* · **Mike Hager** *Former House Majority Leader (resigned 2016)*

It was a bit of a surprise when Hager, the former House Majority Leader and now a lobbyist, entered the race to challenge Jake Johnson, the Deputy Majority Whip who is often considered a rising star in the NC House. Both candidates have over $100,000. This one is a bit of a referendum on NC House leadership.

`Helene recovery`

HOUSE DISTRICT 118 · HAYWOOD — R Primary

House District 118 (R)

Mark Pless *Incumbent, now chairs disaster recovery committee* · **Jimmy Rogers** *Longtime school board member*

Pless initially balked at the 2024 Helene relief bill but ultimately voted with his party on the veto override. Now chairs emergency management/disaster recovery committee. With no polling, it's hard to know what will happen, but the vibes say it could be close.

`Helene recovery`

HOUSE DISTRICT 119 · JACKSON, SWAIN & TRANSYLVANIA — R Primary

★House District 119 (R)

Mike Clampitt *4-term incumbent, House Freedom Caucus — undergoing leukemia treatment*
Anna Ferguson *EBCI enrolled member, family electrical & retail business, Cherokee — NC Jobs PAC backing*
Mike Yow *Anti-Trump R, recently switched parties — longshot*

Clampitt is a four-term incumbent currently undergoing treatment for acute myeloid leukemia. Ferguson, an enrolled Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians member, brings a business background and a distinct constituency. She's backed by NC Jobs PAC, which has flooded the district with mailers and signage. Burrows ran in 2024 and lost to Clampitt by 11 points — the winner here faces him again in November.

`Helene recovery` `EBCI/tribal sovereignty` `Clampitt <$1,200 raised through end of 2025` `NC Jobs PAC to Ferguson`

State Senate 4 races

SENATE DISTRICT 1 · COASTAL (OPEN SEAT) — R Primary

Senate District 1 (R) — Open

Tess Judge *Challenger* · **Clark Tifft** *Challenger* · **Timothy Tillett** *Facing recording dispute over alleged racial slur* · **Bill Lane** *Has establishment ag support*

Hanig left this coastal seat to run for Congress (NC-01). Four-way R primary for a safe GOP seat. Tillett is facing a recording dispute involving the alleged use of a racial slur. Lane has establishment agricultural support. Safe R in the fall.

`open seat` `Tillett controversy`

SENATE DISTRICT 18 · WAKE/GRANVILLE — R Primary

Senate District 18 (R)

Cheryl Caulfield *Wake Co. school board member; endorsed by State Auditor Boliek and Rep. Pare* · **Chris Stock** *Attorney & lobbyist; former aide to a NC senator*

Whoever wins faces Democratic incumbent Sen. Terence Everitt — who won in 2024 by just 128 votes while Trump carried the district, one of only three Democrats to win in Trump districts. Republicans see SD-18 as their best shot at taking back a Wake County Senate seat, and expect to spend heavily in the fall.

`Key fall target` `Everitt won 24 by 128 votes`

SENATE DISTRICT 22 · DURHAM — D Primary

Senate District 22 (D)

Sophia Chitlik *Freshman incumbent* · **DeDreana Freeman** *Narrowly lost Durham City Council reelection in 2025*

Freeman lost her Durham City Council race last year — a mixed signal — but she has the organizational groundwork from that campaign to draw on. Chitlik is a freshman without a long incumbency advantage.

SENATE DISTRICT 34 · CABARRUS — R Primary

Senate District 34 (R)

Chris Measmer *Incumbent (appointed), Cabarrus Co. Commissioner* · **Kevin Crutchfield** *Former rep, lost reelection 2024*

Seat opened when Senate Majority Leader Paul Newton retired from the General Assembly. Crutchfield is a former legislator who was known as a more moderate member. Not a lot of money in this race — at least as of the last campaign finance report — although a recent Charlotte Observer report reveals that DraftKings is putting money and ads behind Crutchfield.

`Former legislator running`

COURTS — APPELLATE 2 races

COURT OF APPEALS — SEAT 3 · D Primary

Court of Appeals Seat 3 (D)

☐ **James Whalen** *Appellate atty, Brooks Pierce — firm defended Justice Riggs in 2024* ☐ **Christine Walczyk** *18-yr Wake Co. district court judge*

Open seat (Judge Allegra Collins retiring). Both candidates have assembled prominent endorsements from former justices, former appellate judges, and other legal figures — making this one of the more interesting judicial primaries on the ballot.

open seat

COURT OF APPEALS — SEAT 1 (VS. DEM INCUMBENT ARROWOOD) · R Primary

Court of Appeals Seat 1 (R)

☐ **Matt Smith** *Union Co. Superior Court Judge (Campbell Law)* ☐ **Michael Byrne** *Administrative Law Judge (Campbell Law)*

Both are Campbell Law grads battling over who is more conservative. Smith has zeroed in on a $500 contribution Byrne made to Arrowood back in 2018, before Court of Appeals races became partisan — Byrne says he had no idea Arrowood was a Democrat at the time. Byrne cites law enforcement endorsements. Winner faces incumbent Judge John Arrowood (D) in the fall.

LOCAL RACES · 7 races

ASHEVILLE CITY COUNCIL · 3 SEATS · NONPARTISAN PRIMARY · MARCH 3 · Nonpartisan

★ Asheville City Council — Nonpartisan · 3 seats

INCUMBENTS SEEKING REELECTION

☐ **Maggie Ullman** *Top vote-getter in 2022 primary* ☐ **Sheneika Smith** *Incumbent* ☐ **Antanette Mosley** *Vice Mayor — under cloud*

SELECTED CHALLENGERS (17 OTHERS IN FIELD)

☐ **Drew Ball** ☐ **Jeffrey Burroughs** ☐ **Scott Burroughs** ☐ **R. Blake Butler** ☐ **Tiffany DeBellott** ☐ **Dan Ferrell** ☐ **Angel Gonzales** ☐ **Nina Ireland**
☐ **Shaunda Jackson** ☐ **Tyler Ladd** ☐ **Jess Young McLean** ☐ **David Moritz** ☐ **Bobby Smith** ☐ **CJ Snyder** ☐ **Kyle Turner** ☐ **Jared Wheatley**
☐ **Keith Young**

The city is staring down a $30M budget shortfall — residents are pushing back hard on projected tax increases and service cuts, including to public transit. That fiscal crisis, plus lingering Helene recovery frustrations, likely explains why 20 people filed for 3 seats. The field is certain to produce progressive winners; the question is which ones. Mosley's incumbency advantage is damaged: the vice mayor is under active NC State Board of Elections investigation after records showed she claimed a homestead exemption on an Atlanta property — worth $19,000+ in tax savings from 2018-2025 — available only to primary residents, while registering to vote and run for office in Asheville. Mosley maintains she is in Asheville "90% of the time." Name recognition favors Ullman and Smith; Mosley's cloud — and a large field — could shake up who makes the top 6. 20 candidates · top 6 advance · voters pick 3.

$30M budget gap · Helene recovery · Mosley residency probe · Nonpartisan — progressive field

JACKSON COUNTY · COMMISSION CHAIR · SYLVA AREA · R Primary

★ Jackson County Commission Chair

☐ **Jarrett Crowe** ☐ **Jon Brown** *Conservative challenger, former Sylva Town commissioner*
☐ **David Rogers** *More conservative — explicit backing of local GOP party apparatus* ☐ **Mark Letson** *Incumbent chair — lone dissenter on library withdrawal*

A surprisingly consequential local race. The all-R commission voted 4-1 to withdraw from the **Fontana Regional Library system** over LGBTQ content disputes — driven in part by what the Smoky Mountain News describes as "misinformation and outside agitation" — with Letson casting the lone no vote both on withdrawal. The county's general fund has ballooned 49% over four budget cycles ($71.7M to $106.9M), and a $34M capital project portfolio has swelled to $65M+. Rogers' explicit endorsement by the local GOP party organization has itself drawn criticism.

Library exit — costs tripling · 49% budget growth · Local GOP backing Rogers

WAKE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY · OPEN SEAT · D Primary

★ Wake County District Attorney

☐ **Wiley Nickel** *Former Congressman — no prosecutorial experience (defense atty)*
☐ **Sherita Walton** *Former ADA in Manhattan & Wake; endorsed by outgoing DA Freeman; would be Wake's first Black DA*
☐ **Melanie Shekita** *Decades as Wake ADA; leads Special Victims Unit; endorsed by judges & prosecutors*

DA Lorrin Freeman is retiring after 11+ years. Because Wake leans left, the D primary will decide the winner of the general election. Nickel, who dropped out of the US Senate race to endorse Roy Cooper, is the best-known name — but he is a defense attorney, not a prosecutor. Freeman endorsed Walton; Shekita and Walton are running on prosecutorial experience. Nickel's name ID vs. the professionals' credibility is the central tension.

open seat · D primary = general · Statewide impact (capital county) · Former legislator running

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These races are far from the only interesting primary elections in NC. But I've got to cut it off somewhere.

Sources: *The Assembly NC — "10 NC Primaries to Watch in 2026" (Feb. 2026); "16 More NC Primaries to Watch" by Bryan Anderson (Feb. 10, 2026) · WUNC — "Longtime Sheriff Seeks to Unseat Powerful NC Senate Republican Leader" by Colin Campbell (Feb. 23, 2026); "Six Downballot NC Primaries Worth Watching" (Feb. 24, 2026) · News & Observer — "Inside NC's High-Stakes Primary Races" (Feb. 2026); NC Primary Voter Guide (2026) · Charlotte Observer — Editorial Board endorsements in 2026 primary elections (Feb. 2026) · Smoky Mountain News — "Republican Primary Tests Identity and Power in the 119th District" by Cory Vaillancourt (Feb. 2026); "Pless Positions Himself as Steady Hand Amid Slow Recovery" by Cory Vaillancourt (Feb. 4, 2026) · Outer Banks Voice — "It's Goodwin vs. Spruill in the Primary for the NC House District 1 Seat" by Mark Jurkowitz (Feb. 19, 2026) · Asheville Watchdog (Feb. 2026) · Blue Ridge Public Radio (Feb. 2026) · Spectrum News 1 — "Big Races to Watch Tuesday in North Carolina's Primary" by Reuben Jones (Feb. 27, 2026) · NC Newsline · WRAL · Ballotpedia · NC State Board of Elections campaign finance filings · Compiled Feb. 2026*

The format is modeled loosely on the one used by Bolts Magazine's election cheat sheets.

Primary Day: March 3, 2026

Melissa Wargo

From: Joy Mischley
Sent: Friday, February 20, 2026 5:22 PM
To: Jeffrey Hughes; Christy Agner
Cc: Melissa Wargo; Paul Hammer
Subject: Re: 2026 Hinds Center room reservations: Early Voting

Hi Jeff,

Yes, those dates are correct. They do include Election Day as well.

Thank you.

My best,
Joy

Western Carolina University

VOTING is Social Work

WNC Mountain Life

Joy Mischley, MSW, LCSW
Director
Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
Western Carolina University | 273 Belk
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2643 | jmischley@wcu.edu
Pronouns: she/her/hers

From: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, February 18, 2026 2:53 PM
To: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Hammer <pwhammer@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: RE: 2026 Hinds Center room reservations: Early Voting

Hi Joy,

We currently have MPR held from October 14 to November 4. Please let me know if these dates are correct.

Thanks

From: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, February 18, 2026 12:13 PM
To: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: 2026 Hinds Center room reservations: Early Voting

Hi Jeff,

I'm very appreciative of your flexibility and all the wonderful partnership of your team regarding the voting site in the UC. I see that the UC MPR was released in 25Live for the Early Voting/Election Day period for the current primaries. I hope that others are able to make use of the space.

Based on a recent email from Amanda Allen, Director of the Jackson County Board of Elections, please continue to hold the UC MPR space for the Oct/Nov 2026 election dates.

Thank you again!

My best,
Joy

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From: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Thursday, January 22, 2026 11:48 AM
To: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>; Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: 2026 Hinds Center room reservations: Early Voting

Hi All,

We had a meeting of WCU's Civic Advisory Committee earlier this week. It was recommended that we wait for another week or two before releasing the multipurpose room. I'm not aware of any pending

litigation. However, it has happened with college voting sites in the past, so seems prudent to give it a little bit more time.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

My best,
Joy

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From: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 4:38 PM
To: Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: 2026 Hinds Center room reservations: Early Voting

Thanks, Christy

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From: Christy Agner <cagner@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 2:49:13 PM
To: Jeffrey Hughes <hughes@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Joy Mischley <jmischley@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: 2026 Hinds Center room reservations: Early Voting

Jeff,

While Joy will have more information and next step detail, the State Board of Elections voted today to accept the Jackson County Board of Elections plan, which excludes the WCU Hinds Center for the primary early voting period. I defer to Joy on actions, but at the appropriate time, those room reservations may be available to the campus population for alternate use.

Christy Agner
Western Carolina University

Melissa Wargo

From: Julia Duvall
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 9:21 AM
To: Steve Lillard; Paul Garner
Cc: Mike Byers; Melissa Wargo
Subject: Re: Media Request

Thank you!! I sure will!

Julia Hartbarger Duvall '15

Assistant Director of Communications

University Communications and Marketing
Western Carolina University | H.F. Robinson Building
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.2197 | jduvall@wcu.edu

From: Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 8:55 AM
To: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Media Request

Thank You so much Julia,

I agree that this has hopefully passed it's prime.

Please let me know if you need anything.

Take care.

Steve

Steven D. Lillard
Chief of Police
Western Carolina University Police
Western Carolina University | Camp Annex
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7301 | sdlillard@email.wcu.edu

From: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 8:53 AM
To: Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Media Request

Hi Steve,

Yes, she is a graduate of WCU, and I worked with her on several occasions while she was a student reporter. I have also worked with her a few times since she started at WLOS. She has not reached out to me either, and this is old news at this point. I do have a statement that I can provide her if Paul, Melissa and Mike would like for me to reach out to her. I will defer to them for that call.

Draft statement below:

STATEMENT

Western Carolina University students participated in a peaceful march on North Carolina Highway 107 near the Cullowhee Recreation Center in response to the closure of an on-campus voting site. The demonstration was a student-led effort that included participation from several registered student organizations.

To support student access to early voting, WCU began offering shuttle service to nearby voting locations on Thursday, Feb. 12. This service will continue throughout the early voting period until Friday, Feb. 27. In addition, shuttle transportation will be available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, March 3.

WCU remains committed to ensuring our students have access to voting resources.

Western Carolina University

Julia Hartbarger Duvall '15

Assistant Director of Communications

University Communications and Marketing
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From: Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 8:39 AM
To: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Media Request

Hey Julia.

I did not hear back from the reporter yesterday.

Do you happen to know her?

Perhaps they have moved on to something else but I wanted to check back in in case you feel like we need to respond.

Thanks.

Steve

Western Carolina University

Steven D. Lillard
Chief of Police
Western Carolina University Police
Western Carolina University | Camp Annex
1 University Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723
o: (828) 227.7301 | sdlillard@email.wcu.edu

From: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 13, 2026 6:43 PM
To: Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Re: Media Request

Thanks Steve! I'll touch base with you on Monday!

Julia Hartbarger Duvall
Assistant Director of Communications
University Communications and Marketing
Western Carolina University
828.227.2197 | jduvall@wcu.edu

From: Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>
Sent: Friday, February 13, 2026 6:12:21 PM
To: Julia Duvall <jduvall@email.wcu.edu>; Paul Garner <pgarner@email.wcu.edu>
Cc: Mike Byers <mtbyers@email.wcu.edu>; Melissa Wargo <wargo@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Fw: Media Request

Hey Julia.

I wanted to pass this along.

I am not planning to respond this weekend and will not do anything next week unless we agree on what would be the best statement.

Please let me know if you need any further.

Take care

Steve Lillard

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From: Deanna Sipe <dsipe@sbgtv.com>
Sent: Friday, February 13, 2026 5:35:44 PM
To: Steve Lillard <sdlillard@email.wcu.edu>; Brian Thomas <bthomas@email.wcu.edu>
Subject: Media Request

You don't often get email from dsipe@sbgtv.com. Learn why this is important

WARNING: This email originated from a non-WCU email account. Do not click links or open attachments unless you are confident the content is safe.

Good afternoon,

This is Deanna Sipe with WLOS News 13.

We saw a social media post regarding walking to the Jackson County Rec. Center in protest of the polling center on campus being closed. Here's a link to the post: https://www.facebook.com/WCU.College.Dems/posts/pfbid02h8DfXCP5UYzxeBsP8ZKdqc7UpCF48kvsF7mWAh8cPZRaySwvR5P9q1KU3gZjC6v9l

Could you provide a statement about this protest?

How safe is it to walk to the new polling place?

Do you know how incidents happened on this road last year?

WCU provides a shuttle service to the voting site. What are your thoughts on students walking to the center rather than taking those shuttles?

Thanks!
Deanna Sipe
WLOS Digital Content Producer
Work Cell:828-782-1574